

Major Jordan Lawrence Mott *1881-1931* Radioman, writer and outdoors man. The major led a life straight out of a romantic novel, born in New York, his father was the president of J.L. Mott Iron Works, Trenton N.J. The younger Mott graduated from Harvard and went to work as a reporter in NYC. He covered his assignments in a chauffeur driven imported limousine and was dubbed the “Millionaire reporter.” Unhappy with his first marriage, Mott eloped with a married woman which neither had bothered to secure a divorce. The young man was disinherited from his socialite parents.

During WW I our subject served in the U.S. Army Signal Corps commissioned as a major. After the war, living on Santa Catalina Island off California where Mott pursued writing, deep sea fishing for marlin and became prominent in the emerging radio industry.

Our man was engineer and founder of station KFWO -AM in 1925 from the living room of his home on Claressa Street in Avalon from 1925 until 1928 (The first station on the air from Avalon!) Catalina Island California. With only 250 Watts and a flat top wire antenna from Mott’s home. Though the station was on the air a few hours in the daytime, the bulk of its broadcast hours were at night, when the sky-wave signal was heard often outside of Southern California. With only a few hundred stations on the air at that time, KFWO had reception reports from a least 25 states from the west coast to the east coast. Doesn’t he look like CNN Caster Lou Dobbs?



The Major pictured here in a rare postcard from Catalina in 1927. It features Mott kicking back in his ostentatious argyle socks as he imparts wisdom to the masses from his verdant garden on the tropical isle with 250 watts!

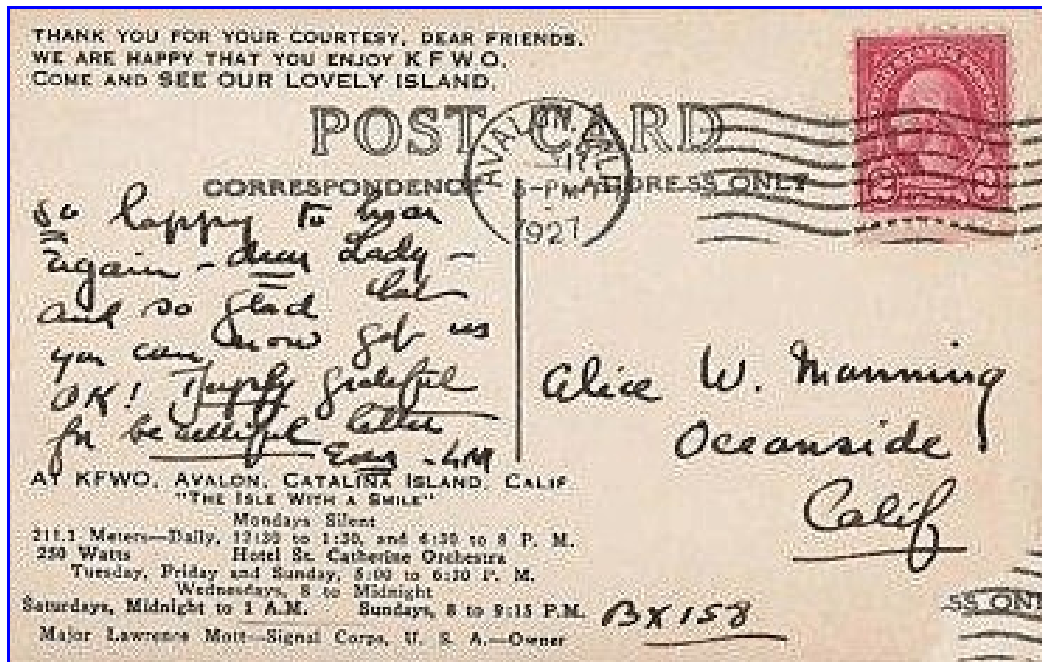
Our subject was a close friend of Catalina Island owner William Wrigley, Jr., thus KFWO was used to promote tourism on the island, using the station

slogan taken from the call letters, “Katalina For Wonderful Outings.” Besides attempting to recruit more visitors to visit Catalina with special news and talks, Mott used a phone line to broadcast music from the Hotel St. Catherine orchestra a few times each day, along with live music from his home performed by volunteer singers and musicians.

In 1928 Mr. Mott was exploring making KFWO a commercial station. He decided to move from Catalina to the Hollywood Hills and he took KFWO off the air. He did not bother to sell his radio station, he simply took it off the air and turned in the license.

The F.R.C. (Federal Radio Commission) Had about that time assigned KFWO to divide or share air time on 1500 kc AM with KWTC in Santa Ana, but that never took place. Mott donated a lot of his equipment to KWTC owner John Hancock. Some of the old KFWO equipment was still in place around 1930 by KWTC at the Santa Ana Register newspaper building. Continued

It was soon discovered that the old KFWO equipment was outdated. Jim Hilliker said “My point is that today, I don’t think one could get a regular radio station on the air in a residential neighborhood as Mott did, and broadcast from a piano and microphone setup in his living room. Radio was much simpler and maybe more fun in those pioneering days of broadcasting in Southern California.



Much of Major Mott’s time later on was spent campaigning for conservation of wildlife and natural resources. He was attracted to Oregon and the North Umpqua for its excellent steel head fishing and made his summer camp there until his premature death at age 50. Mott cherished his time at Steamboat Oregon so much that even after he had contracted the cancer that eventually killed him, he traveled from California to his camp at Steamboat to spend his final days on the river. The spring of the year after Mott’s death in 1931 marked the appearance at Steamboat of perhaps the most famous sportsman in America, Zane Grey.

Major Mott’s legacy is well preserved in the Steamboat area. The bridge leading from the main North Umpqua Highway across the river to the site of his old camp still bears his name, as do a series of nearby fishing pools, collectively known as “Mott Water.” The fisherman’s trail that provides access to the south bank of the North Umpqua River is now maintained by the U.S. Forest Service and officially known as the Mott Trail.

Partial text by Jim Hilliker, Monterey, Ca. (Hilliker was a commercial broadcaster for 25 years) and expertise of The Steam Boat Inn dot com.